

**COMMISSION ON AGING
MEETING SUMMARY MINUTES
Dennis and Phil Ratner Museum**

March 24, 2011

Members Present	Members Absent
Alicia Bazan-Jimenez	Miriam Kelty
Elaine Kotell Binder	Kenneth Montgomery
Elizabeth Brooks-Evans	Robert (Bob) Tiller
Myrna Cooperstein	
Morton A. Davis	
Paul DelPonte	Liaisons
Tammy Duell	Pazit Aviv, Housing Opportunities Commission
John Honig	Chris Borawski, Public Libraries
Vivien Hsueh	Sam Korper, Commission on Health
Charles Kauffman	Autz Inheymoo, Office of Community Partnerships
Judith Levy	
Leslie Marks	
Barbara Mulitz	Guests
Nhora Murphy	Gabriel Albornoz, Recreation Dept. Director
Mona Negm	Margarita Chukhim
Rudolph (Rudy) Oswald	Phyllis Courlander, Top Banana
Joseph (Joe) Petrizzo	
Marcia Pruzan	
Spencer Schron	Staff:
Beth Shapiro	Jay Kenney
John (Jack) Sprague	Odile Saddi
Judith Welles	Sharon Briggs
Grace Whipple	

The Commission on Aging (COA) Chair Elaine Binder opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. She thanked all COA members for their support and hard work, and asked for introductions around the room.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

COA members approved the February meeting minutes with one correction to reflect that Robert (Bob) Tiller attended at that meeting.

COA REPORTS

Treasurer's Report – Vivien Hsueh

The current account balance is \$1,511.92.

Chair's Report – Elaine Binder

- **Annual Report.** Elaine thanked Marcia Pruzan for an outstanding job in preparing the 2010 Annual Report. It has been printed in limited quantities and is available online. One correction has been made, which will appear in both the online version and any subsequent printed copies.

- **Annual Meeting.** The COA annual meeting is scheduled on May 26 at the Silver Spring Civic Building. Its purpose is to allow members to work together as a group to consider and select appropriate topics for Summer Studies. The guest speaker will be futurist David Pearce Snyder.

COA members have received an electronic version of the COA Summer Studies outline. COA Committees, as well as individual members may submit proposals. The Executive Committee will review the topics, and all proposals will be presented to the full Commission for consideration and prioritization at the Annual Meeting. Usually three Summer Studies topics are selected. Written proposals for Summer Studies topics should be submitted to Odile and Elaine no later than May 13th.

Grace and Jack are planning for meeting luncheon. It will cost \$15 per person. Members should make checks out to the Commission on Aging and give it to Grace or Jack. More information about the day's program, location and directions will be forthcoming.

- **Pledge 25.** In support of the County's "Pledge 25" initiative celebrating the 25th anniversary of Community Service Day, John Honig is collecting data from members about the number of volunteer hours they contributed to COA activities during the month of March.
- **Active Aging Expo.** On May 2, the City of Gaithersburg will host the Third annual **Active Aging Expo**. This year's theme is "You are never too late or too old to be creative." Volunteers are needed to help staff a table at this event. Elizabeth Brooks-Evans offered to assist. Others interested in volunteering should notify Grace or Elaine.

COMMITTEES REPORTS

Aging in Place and Community – Beth Shapiro

Beth provided highlights of a presentation to the Committee by David Mohebbi, President of Regency Cab Company. The company has purchased 12 new "senior-friendly" vehicles at an investment of \$50,000 each. The cab company needs licenses to operate these vehicles in the County. The Department of Transportation follows a competitive process and existing regulations in providing these licenses. Regency Cab has asked the COA for a letter of support. Although the Commission cannot endorse any specific company, it can support the concept of increasing the availability of safe and specially designed vehicles that are senior friendly. The AIP Committee will review best practices and needs assessments. Beth also indicated that the Villages Blue Print, which was developed by Leslie Marks and the Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Center, is available through Ken Hartman's office.

Communications and Community Outreach – Judy Welles

The committee continues to focus on communication with CO Stakeholders. Spencer Schron is leading the Committee in exploring ways to work more closely with groups representing the diversity of our County, including religious and ethnic organizations, retirement communities, and GROWS. As part of this effort, COA members are encouraged to attend the monthly GROWS meetings. In addition, it was noted that the COA website requires updating.

Senior Health and Wellness Meeting –Tammy Duell

- The *Healthy Montgomery* website was launched in February (www.healthymontgomery.org).
- Together with the COA and others, the End-of-Life Care Coalition is sponsoring a National Decisions Day event, "Consider the Conversation," on April 7, 2011, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. in Silver Spring. The goal is to inspire dialogue about end-of-life issues. The Committee will continue to work on the Bill of Rights or a Proclamation regarding End of Life Care.

- A Falls Prevention workgroup has been formed and a meeting was planned for March.
- The Committee plans to learn more about and focus on mental health issues as they relate to seniors. Mental health was mentioned as a possible summer study topic.

Public Policy Report – Jack Sprague

Jack Sprague explained the process for introducing a bill in the State House of Representatives:

1. Bill is introduced.
2. Bill is reviewed by Sub-committee.
3. Bill is reviewed by Committee.
4. If approved, the bill goes to the next chamber (Senate in this case) for the very same process. If a bill originates in the Senate, it will go to the House for a sister bill.

The Public Policy Committee this session has concentrated on five bills. Although none has yet passed both houses, all five have made good progress thus far:

1. MOLST (Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment).
2. Financial crimes. At this time, the bill is not moving forward in the House. It has passed the Senate. The bill may pass stipulating crimes over \$50,000.
3. Communities for a Lifetime: The hearings for the Aging in Place bill went well. In conjunction with this information, Jack recommended reading “Emily: Alone” a book by Stewart O Nan, on the topic of aging gracefully.
4. Privacy of Senior Center Information.
5. Absentee Voting.

Jack has been involved with each of these bills and has developed good relationships with bill sponsors and key committee members and chairs. During this session, the Public Policy Committee worked closely with four senators and a few delegates. The Committee will continue to organize the annual COA legislative breakfast in December.

Finally, the Governors’ Award on Aging, “Trail Blazer Award” nomination has been announced. At Jack’s recommendation, a motion was submitted and approved to nominate Senator Montgomery for the award by the April 8th deadline.

Seniors Today Task Force – Marcia Pruzan

A new segment of “Seniors Today” features COA member Vivien Hsueh and OCL staff member Lily Qi, who spoke about County programs for seniors of Asian descent; a second segment featured Shawn Brennan, and Jean Logan from the End of Life Coalition, who spoke about End of Life issues. The final segment featured Micki Gordon and David Gamse promoting the May 17th Jobs Expo. This show will air the first Monday in April both on television and via the County's senior website.

It is essential that other commissioners become involved in the planning of this program, because this is Marcia’s last year on the Commission. Planning involves a monthly telephone conference call and follow-up with invited guests. Please contact Marcia if interested.

FY12 County Executive Proposed Budget—Guest Speaker: Gabriel Albornoz, Director, Department of Recreation

Mr. Albornoz thanked the COA for its remarkable service to the County. Although the County is experiencing a severe fiscal crisis, the proposed FY12 service reductions are less drastic than they might have been.

More than 80% of the budget covers personnel costs. Therefore, the County Executive has made critical and painful decisions about services reductions and adjustments to County employees' compensation. The Department of Recreation operates 34 recreation facilities throughout the County. They include aquatics facilities, recreation centers, and senior centers. The Department offers more than 6,000 programs. More than 600,000 county residents participate annually, of whom more than 100,000 are older adults.

User fees generate more than half of the Department's revenues. This presents a challenge when the budget reductions are required, because not all programs charge fees. Fees from aquatics programs, adult sports programs, and basketball programs do cover their direct costs. Unfortunately, cuts were made disproportionately in programs without fees, such as after-school programs, programs for older adults, and programs for persons with disabilities.

Over the past three years, the Recreation Department's budget has been reduced by 24%, and 40% of the career workforce has been eliminated. Fourteen years ago, there were 14 managers; today there are only three. Yet the Recreation Department has been able to hold the line through a variety of partnerships, the dedication of talented volunteers, and a lot of creative thinking.

For FY12, the Recreation Department budget was reduced by 5.5%. Funds have been restored for equipment maintenance, janitorial services and the operation of the 11 senior neighborhood programs. Unfortunately, the \$15,000 funds dedicated to support Senior Olympics were eliminated. Last year 2600 seniors participated in these athletic events. (It was later suggested that private sector sponsors could be sought for supporting the Senior Olympics program. This could be an attractive proposition for a successful partnership with local businesses.)

The Senior Sneakers annual fee of \$50 has been implemented since January 2011, and as a result participation has declined. The FY11 Senior Centers reductions in operating hours will continue in FY12. The Department is further researching the possibility of charging a small fee for services.

John J. Kenney, Ph.D., Chief, Aging and Disability Services Health and Human Services (HHS)

Dr. Kenney thanked the COA for its effective advocacy and spoke about the proposed HHS FY12 budget. In the fall, HHS received a directive to reduce County funding by 15%. Fortunately this deep cut did not materialize, as Mr. Leggett is committed to maintaining services to those who are most vulnerable. The FY12 proposed HHS budget reflects a 4.9%, or a \$10 million reduction in County funds. For Aging and Disability Services, the proposed FY12 reduction is \$1.4 million, of a total FY11 budget for A&D of \$37.5 million. In addition, it has been proposed that funding for services to persons with developmental disabilities be reduced by \$800,000, or about 7%.

The County Executive identified three priorities through this budget process over the last three years:

1. Public safety
2. Education
3. Safety net services

The budget this year was prepared via a cluster process. Both the HHS and the Recreation Department Directors co-led one cluster that includes HHS, Recreation, Office of Community Partnerships, Regional Services Centers and Libraries.

Area Agencies on Aging Report – Odile Saddi, Ed.D, Director, Area Agencies on Aging

A number of budget changes affect seniors or related to senior services in the FY12 proposed County budget.

1) **Aging and Disability Services/HHS:**

Reductions

- Reduce *In Home Care* services by \$100,000 (8 persons on the waiting list will not be served.) The Wait list is 46. Waiting for SSTA case management: 198.
- Eliminate contract with *JSSA* for case management services: \$29,000 (25 seniors.)
- Eliminate contract with *Senior Korean Services* for chore services: \$25,000 (20 seniors.)
- Eliminate a *Full-Time Policy and Compliance* position: \$170,900

Wait/Waiver lists

- Older Adults Waiver Wait List: 1828
- Adult Evaluation Review Services Wait List: 46
- Senior Care Wait List: 23
- Group Home Subsidies Wait List: 26

2) **Health and Human Services: An overall reduction of 4.9 % over last year in County funds**

3) **General**

- Eliminate *Energy Tax Rebate* program: \$479,500
- Reduce *Montgomery Cares* contract by \$1,194,800; charge \$25 fee annual co-pay for participants.
- Reduce Dental Care services by \$52,380.
- Eliminate Burial assistance: \$39,300.
- Eliminate 32 full-time and 10 Part-Time HHS positions. (Seventeen are filled.)

4) **Transportation**

- No reductions to Call 'N Ride or RideOn programs/services.
- An increase in the amount participants pay—roughly \$5 increase for each category in Call-N-Ride.
- Increase of \$15 (from \$30 to \$45) in RideOn's Monthly Pass. Pass is worth \$94.

5) **Libraries:**

- Eliminate information service desk staff on Sundays.
- Reduce staffing at Silver Spring/Twinbrook/Chevy Chase/and Long Branch libraries.

6) **Consolidations:**

- Create new Office of Community Engagement by consolidating the Office of Community Partnerships with Commission for Women, Office of Human Rights, and Regional Services Centers.
- Develop a plan to consolidate the Housing Opportunities Commission with the Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

7) **Community Grants:**

- Reduce *JCA Senior Expo* grant by \$24,000 to \$75,000.

8) **Recreation Department:**

- Restore staff and services to all eleven neighborhood senior programs.
- Maintain operation of senior centers at the FY11 level.
- Eliminate support to Maryland Special Olympics: (\$15,000).
- Open White Oaks Recreation Center in Spring 2012.
- Close Plum Gar and Scotland facilities temporarily for renovations.

Discussion Items:

At a February Town Hall meeting of County Commissions and Boards, Vivian, Marcia, and Elaine presented County Executive Isiah Leggett with the COA budget priorities. Mr. Leggett made it clear that he is committed to protecting Montgomery County's most vulnerable residents.

The COA agreed that our top priority is the restoration of funding for In-Home Aide Services (IHAS). The COA must be vocal about the impact of the past three years of budget reductions on the lives of older County adults.

Social Security beneficiaries have received no increase the past two years. Federal funding reductions have been announced for energy assistance and senior employment services, which adversely affects older adults. Rudy Oswald has drafted a letter for the Public Policy Committee regarding the federal funds reductions. More details will be forthcoming in the near future, and once additional data about local impact is available, the Committee will ask the COA to send the letter to our delegation in Washington.

The COA will testify during the upcoming Council Budget public hearing process (April 5-7). In addition, anyone can testify as an individual. Written testimony can be longer than the three-minute oral presentation allows.

Talking points will be prepared for COA members to use in meetings with Council Members. Message points will include: "Do no harm," consider unintended consequences of In-home Services reductions, a reminder about senior demographics, and the economic benefit of a senior-friendly community.

LIAISON REPORTS:

Commission on Health (COH)—Sam Korper

The COH is developing its strategic plan and selecting budget priorities.

Vital Living Committee (VLC)—Chuck Kaufman

- The VLC Navigator publication is now available in print at area libraries and on the senior website;
- Volunteers are needed for the upcoming 50 Plus Employment Expo on May 17;
- The Adopt-a-Library project is underway.

Department of Transportation (DOT)—Joy Barrow

Forty-five hundred people use the Call-N-Ride program; many of these riders also have Medicaid, and thus use Medicaid-funded DOT transportation for medical appointments.

Top Banana--Phyllis Courlander

FY12 funding for Top Banana will be \$68,153 pending Council approval. Phyllis thanked the Commission for its ongoing support. Top Banana is a non-profit agency; it accepts food stamps, whereas other grocery delivery programs do not. The program delivers groceries directly into people's homes, and also can help with a few in-home tasks such as changing light-bulbs, taking trash out, etc.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30AM

Respectfully Submitted,
Marcia Pruzan
Secretary